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'Bane of Mankind'

# Are We on the Brink Of Another Arms Race?

ABM File

By ROSWELL L. GILPATRIC

FOR many people, the idea of an "arms race" acquired its sinister connotation some 20 years ago with the beginning of the nuclear-weapons age. Yet in fact rivalry in arms, even in its earlier and simpler manifestations, has always been a bane of mankind. Whenever two nations have found themselves in competition to develop, produce and deploy new arms, the results have been to divert national energy, resources and time from peaceful uses, to exacerbate relations between those nations in other fields by engendering fear and distrust, and, above all, to provide the ingredients of easily ignited conflict.

Notwithstanding the almost universal desire to contain competitive armament struggles, our generation has never been free of them. Since World War II the United States has gone through two cycles of competition with the Soviet Union in strategic armaments, and the signs are multiplying that we may be on the brink of engaging in still another arms race.

THE first step-up in U.S. armaments after World War II grew out of Soviet actions and attitudes during the Berlin blockade of 1948-49 and the general intransigence of the Stalin regime on all international-security issues. When it became evident that the United States would have to provide itself with a strategic deterrent against Soviet aggressiveness, a decision was taken in the early nineteen-fifties to develop and produce a post-war generation of medium- and long-range jet bombers, first the subsonic B-47's and B-52's and later the supersonic B-58's. These manned-bomber programs were paralleled by other major technological advances, such as the development of more compact nuclear weapons through improvement in the yield-to-weight ratio of atomic warheads, and also by the

production of jet tankers and the introduction of air-refueling techniques to make it possible for our bomber fleets to reach the heartland of Russia.

The Soviets reacted in two ways. First, they developed their own fleet of medium- and long-range bombers, the so-called Bears and Bisons; second, they installed elaborate defensive systems consisting of wide belts of antiaircraft cannon and missile emplacements supplemented by large fleets of interceptor aircraft.

These moves, in turn, led to extensive U.S. countermeasures, including the establishment of a far-flung radar network, known as the Distant Early Warning Line, whose outer perimeter extended from Alaska across the northern reaches of Canada to Greenland. Picket ships and plane-borne radar extended the bomber-warning systems along both the East and West Coasts. The U.S. also set up, under joint command with Canada, numerous air-defense centers consisting of fighter aircraft and antibomber surface-to-air missiles. Finally, to tie together all of the elements in this vast complex for the defense of North America, there was installed during the mid-nineteen-fifties what was called the Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (SAGE) system.

All these offensive and defensive measures cost the U.S. many billions of dollars before much of the equipment involved was rendered obsolete by the advancing state of the military art.

FROM the start of the first post-World War II arms race, fundamental differences became apparent in the Soviet and U.S. responses to each other's strategic-weapons programs. The U.S. sought to emphasize and to invest more of its resources in offensive capabilities, whereas the Soviets have always stressed defensive measures. In consequence, as the Russians built up stronger defenses, the U.S. added to the numbers of its strategic forces and provided them with the capacity to

penetrate Soviet defenses. At the same time we learned that beyond a certain level of defense, the cost advantage lies increasingly with offense.

THE next lap in the arms race, beginning in the late fifties and continuing into the early sixties, was characterized chiefly by a partial shift from manned bombers to ballistic missiles, in both offensive and defensive roles, and by improved intelligence through satellite-based reconnaissance about what the other power was up to. After what at first appeared to be, but never in fact materialized as, an early Soviet lead—the so-called "missile gap" of 1950 and 1960—the U.S. forged ahead in both the quantity and the quality of its intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM's).

Quickly on the heels of the first generation, liquid-fueled Atlas and Titan missiles, launched from "soft"—that is, vulnerable—land-based sites, came the Minuteman and Polaris families of ICBM's, solid-fueled and fired either from "hardened"—protected—underground silos or underwater from submarines. With a force destined soon to comprise 1,000 Minutemen and 656 Polaris missiles, U.S. ICBM's have consistently outnumbered the Soviet missile force by a ratio of 3 or 4 to 1. Moreover, for some time Soviet missiles were of less advanced types, being liquid-fueled and deployed in soft or semi-protected sites and hence vulnerable to attack.

During this same period of the early nineteen-sixties, both U. S. and Soviet defenses against bomber attacks were strengthened by the development and installation of successively improved models of surface-to-air missiles of which, characteristically, the Soviets deployed by far the greatest number. To cope with tougher Soviet defenses, U. S. bombers were modified to carry air-launched missiles in addition to gravity bombs and were equipped with electronic countermeasures to confuse Russian radar.

Both sides began developing anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems, but it was only toward the end of 1966 that our Government acknowledged

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from the development stage to the quantity production and deployment of ABM's. In contrast, the U. S. has kept its ABM effort in the design and development level and continued to place its principal reliance on the capacity of its strategic-weapons-delivery systems, whether bombers or missiles, to penetrate any type of Soviet defense, no matter how sophisticated.

After the Russians had been stood down during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 and had reached an accord with the U. S. for a partial test-ban treaty in 1963, it appeared that the Soviets might accept the then-existing military equation with the U. S. and not challenge us to another round in the strategic arms race.

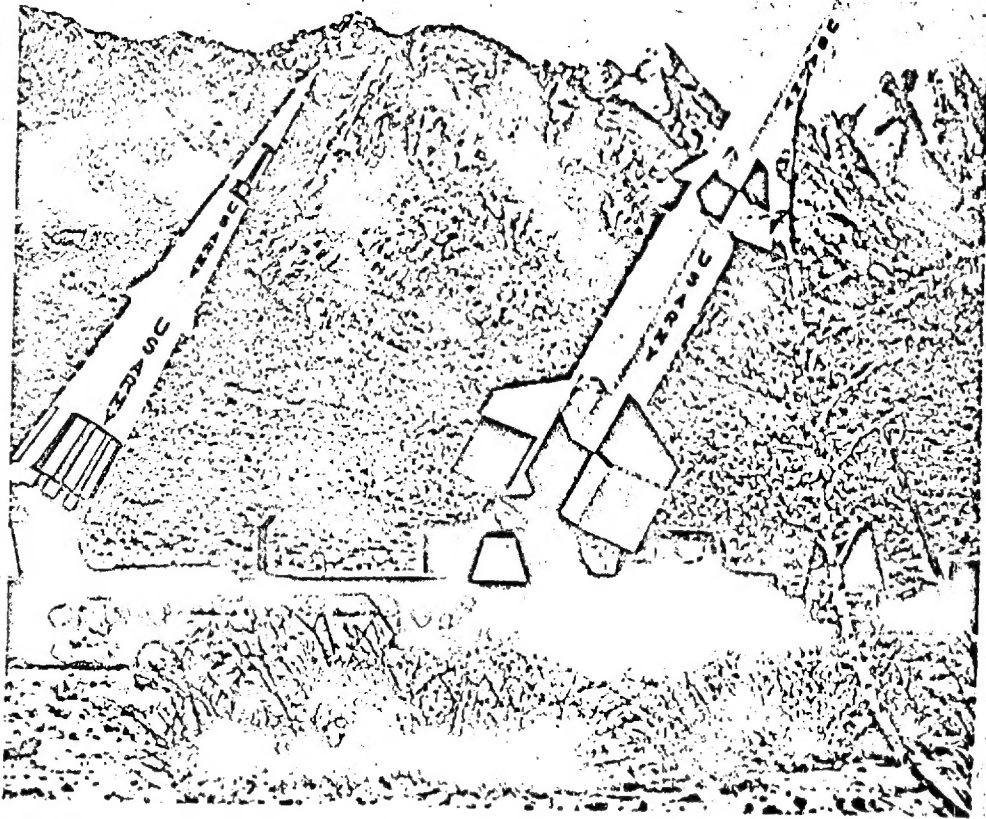
For a period after the present Soviet leadership headed by Brezhnev and Kosygin took over from Khrushchev, it seemed to be Soviet policy to seek a *détente* with the U.S. Our Government therefore felt safe in leveling off its strategic forces at least until the time—not expected before 1975-80—when the Chinese Communists might develop their own nuclear weapons to the point of being able to threaten the continental United States.

As 1966 drew to a close, however, the American people were told that not only were the Soviets proceeding with a comprehensive installation of ABM's, but in addition were setting out to build a larger force of solid-fueled and invulnerably sited ballistic missiles. Such a build-up might, it was indicated, reach a point, beginning in 1968, where the U. S. strategic force of some 1,650 Minutemen and Polaris missiles would no longer enjoy its present overwhelming margin of superiority.

It thus became apparent that, in determining how to respond to these new developments, the U. S. is once again facing the possibility of a stepped-up arms race with the Soviet Union of even more critical and dangerous proportions than the two previous cycles.

As he reviews the coming year's military proposals and budgets, President Johnson is therefore confronted with some hard choices regarding new weapons systems. Among them are the following:

(1) Should the U. S. now produce and deploy, either on a full or limited scale, an antiballistic missile system? The current version is known as the Nike X (consisting of two nuclear-tipped interceptor missiles, one short-range called Sprint and the other extended-range, the improved Zeus), supplemented with large numbers of a new high-performance interceptor aircraft, the F-12, and an extensive



**NIKE X**—America's ABM system would consist of (right) the nuclear-tipped, extended-range Zeus missile, plus the nuclear-tipped, short-range Sprint, designed to intercept enemy missiles that get by the Zeus.

Civil Defense program for providing on a nationwide scale fallout shelter protection.

(2) Or should the U. S. instead rely for the maintenance of its "second strike" strategic deterrent on a new generation of ICBM's consisting of Minuteman III and Poseidon missiles—together referred to as Improved Capability Missiles (ICM's)—with the capacity to penetrate or saturate the new Soviet missile defenses?

(3) Should the U.S., in addition to procuring the new ICM's, equip its Air Force with quantities of an Advanced Manned Strategic Aircraft (AMSA) to take over the bomber role from the aging B-52 fleet and ultimately from the new supersonic jet bomber, the B-111, that will become operational a few years hence?

A GO-AHEAD decision on the first, or the first and third, of these proposals will signalize a U. S. determination to do the Soviet Union one better in a new struggle for world power through force of arms and to base its relations with the Soviets

more on a philosophy of conflict than on one of accommodation. Let us first consider the military implications of such a choice.

Defense Secretary McNamara states that the currently planned U.S. offensive force of missiles and bombers was specifically designed to hedge against several different contingencies, including the possibilities "first, that a Soviet ballistic-missile defense might be greater than expected by the intelligence estimates; and, second, that the Soviets might embark upon any one of several possible offensive build-ups, including variations in their target doctrine, variations in the technological sophistication of their weapons systems, and variations in the speed of deployment of those systems."

In thus taking into account possible Soviet threats over and beyond those projected in the latest national intelligence estimates, Secretary McNamara explains that "we have done so because an assured destruction capability, a capability to survive the first strike and survive with sufficient power to destroy the attacker, is the vital first objective which must be

met in full regardless of the cost under all foreseeable circumstances and regardless of any difficulties involved."

His position is that, with the development of Minuteman III, the accelerated development of the Poseidon missile and moving ahead on new penetration aids to insure our weapons getting through any defenses the Soviets may put in place, the U.S. has in effect anticipated and insured against the latest moves by the Soviet Union. Notwithstanding a Russian ABM system and more and better Soviet ICBM's, he concludes that the U.S. strategic forces will continue to maintain their present power to survive a Soviet first strike with sufficient capability to destroy the attacker, which is the foundation of the deterrent power upon which our national security depends.

The conclusions of the Secretary of Defense are being severely questioned in a number of quarters. In the first place, there are indications that most of the professional military organization, from the Joint Chiefs of Staff on down, believes that the United States should go ahead with both production and deployment of an ABM system and also with a new generation of manned bombers as well as the new ICM's.

This military judgment will find strong support in the Congress, especially among the influential leaders of the Armed Forces committees, and will be backed by substantial sectors of public opinion, particularly in the South and on the Republican right. There is also likely to be considerable pressure from segments of the defense industry, backed by the communities that would benefit from increased armament production, for this nation to embark on a new round of strategic weapons building. It is possible that the Secretary of Defense's position may not enjoy undivided support even within the Johnson Administration.

**B**UT apart from the military implications of these new weapons choices, there are a number of political and economic issues which, so far as the public knows, may not have been fully considered.

If the U.S. decides to install ABM's to protect its population, should such

systems also be placed in Europe, and if so, will not the countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain regard in kind? In that event, will the ABM's be furnished to our allies by ourselves, and to the bloc countries by the Soviets, and at whose cost?

Will our action to go ahead with an ABM deployment play into the hands of the Communist Chinese efforts to disrupt U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations? How far will we and the Soviets go beyond ABM's in building active defenses when the costs involved are measured by tens of billions of dollars, with enormous strategic implications and a long-lasting political impact?

The effects would be felt especially in Europe but also, as Communist Chinese nuclear capabilities develop, in India, Japan and other countries on the periphery of the Chinese mainland.

**A** NEW arms race will produce other casualties. Besides the hoped-

treaty, toward which the Soviets and the U.S. have of late been making progress, there have long been under discussion between Russian and American disarmament negotiators a series of other arms-control measures. These include the extension of the partial test ban to include underground testing, the establishment of nuclear-free zones, a cut-off in the production of nuclear materials and a freeze on—or possibly a reduction in—strategic delivery vehicles.

In the event of a new arms race, all this effort, and the partial foundations thereby constructed for further disarmament moves, will go by the board, and whatever headway has been built up, both at the U.N. and in the 18-nation disarmament conference at Geneva, will be lost. Indeed, even if the Soviet Union and the U.S. should in their own interests come to terms on a nonproliferation treaty, it is hardly to be expected that the ma-





for nuclear have-not nations, such as India and Japan, will sign away their rights to join the nuclear club at a time when its two charter members, Russia and the U.S., are building up rather than cutting down their nuclear arsenals.

Still another danger inherent in a renewed arms race lies in its short-term effect in Europe. For the U.S. to press ahead with a new strategic armament program would further weaken the NATO alliance, whose last meeting in Paris stressed the twin themes of *détente* with the Soviet Union and the "diminished threat of military aggression" rather than the need for greater defensive measures. The alliance, already under strain because of our allies' concern over the heavy U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war, would suffer another blow if U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations took a turn for the worse.

In approaching its decisions, the Administration will presumably take into account positive as well as negative emanations from the Soviet Union. Among the favorable developments in U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations are the recently announced agreements for commercial air services between the two countries and for banning weapons of mass destruction from outer space.

Apart from their intrinsic significance, these developments indicate that the Soviet Union has not considered itself entirely inhibited from reaching agreements with the U.S. despite its predicament over Vietnam. This condition cannot, however, be expected to last if the Soviets feel themselves put in the position of countenancing U.S. bombing raids in the Hanoi area which produce civilian casualties. Undoubtedly, the present state of U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations would rapidly worsen if a significant intensification occurred in the scale of our air attacks against North Vietnam.

At worst, Soviet intentions regarding a renewed arms race should be treated as ambivalent and unclear rather than entirely negative. Their ABM deployment can be accounted for otherwise than as indicating a desire to alter the strategic power balance. It not only is in keeping with the ultimate in defensive postures but may also have resulted from military pressures within the Soviet regime rather than from a far-reaching decision to abandon the *détente* objective.

The latest increase in the Soviet defense budget is likewise equivocal. The announced rate of increase, 4 per cent, is not in itself of menacing proportions, although in announcing the rise in defense spending the Soviet authorities spoke of "recently sharpened international tensions" and the increased "danger of a new world war" because of "aggressive acts" of U.S. "imperialists."

**A**SIDE from these vital questions affecting international relations, the effect on our economy of a U.S. decision to proceed with ABM deployment and new strategic weapons would be tremendous. Depending on the timing and extent of these programs, the U.S. defense budget would be inflated by at least \$5-billion to \$6-billion a year, with the probable result that the present level of military expenditure, which will stay in the \$70-billion to \$75-billion-a-year range during the period of the Vietnam war, would thereafter remain at that order of magnitude instead of receding to the pre-Vietnam budget level of around \$50-billion a year.

The effect of this Federal spending and diversion of national resources might well be to reduce or delay further funding of U.S. space and supersonic transport programs as well as to forestall further financing of the Great Society programs such as anti-poverty projects, Federal aid to education, demonstration cities and the like.

It is not, however, the economic cost of a decision to deploy ABM's as well as to add to the level of our bomber and missile forces that is the most disturbing aspect of a renewed arms race. With the U.S. gross national product estimated to rise to \$790 billion during 1967 and to grow at 4 per cent a year thereafter, projecting defense expenditure at 9 per cent of G.N.P. (compared to 15 per cent of G.N.P. during the Korean War) would produce a defense budget of over \$70-billion a year, which should not prove an intolerable burden on our economy. The price tag of another arms race, while staggering, is not in itself an argument against it.

**W**HAT the United States faces is a major watershed in national security policy. Should it re-engage in an armament contest with the Soviet

Union, or should it strive for more progress toward arms control and the economic and sociological measures for military force as means for insuring world peace?

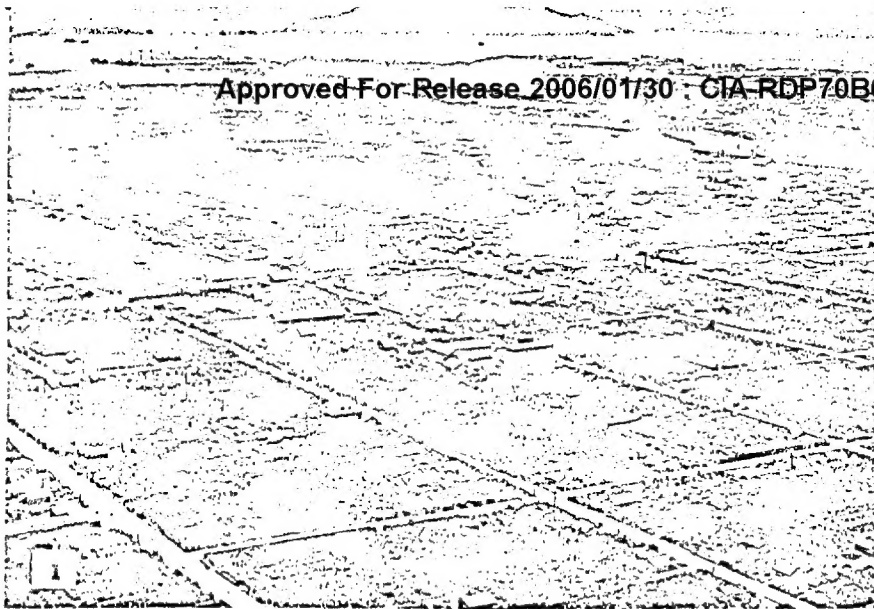
In these terms, the question comes down to how the United States will exercise its acknowledged strength and world leadership—whether toward heightening the tension that will come from renewed emphasis on armaments and accelerated advances in weapons technology or in the direction of arms limitation and the solution of world problems through peaceful means.

Should the decision be reached during 1967 to proceed with any of the major new weapons systems now being pressed upon the President by some of his advisers, their opposite numbers in the Soviet would obviously be in a stronger position to insist on corresponding increases in Russian weapons projects.

The reaction in political terms would be even more dangerous, jeopardizing not only the *détente* so ardently sought after by our allies but also the fragile gains achieved through Soviet restraint in recent years in such troubled areas of the world as Africa, Latin America and on the India-Pakistan subcontinent.

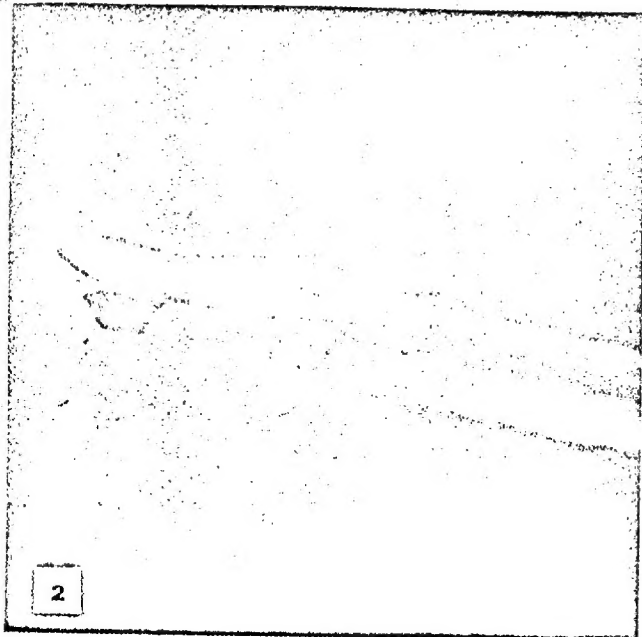
**T**HE decisions which the President now faces are made doubly difficult by the national mood of frustration over the way the war is going in Vietnam. All-too-ready distrust of the Soviets' intentions, coupled with anger at their growing aid to Vietnam, would prompt many of our people to view with suspicion or antagonism a national policy of forbearance in dealing with the Soviet Union. For others, an effort to moderate the competition in arms would be regarded as a sign of weakness and a peril to our national security.

Yet President Johnson has recognized, as did President Kennedy, that if a third world war is to be avoided the United States, as the most advanced of the superpowers, must take the lead in demonstrating a willingness to practice self-discipline both in the use of force and in providing itself with the power to apply force. The present situation puts to a critical test our national determination not to be swerved from the rightness and sanity of that course. ■



*Hiroshima, a year after the bomb.*

**IN THE BEGINNING**—The end of World War II marked the opening of the nuclear weapons age. Then Stalin, notably by the Berlin blockade of 1948-49, convinced the U.S. of the need for a strategic deterrent. The postwar arms race was on.



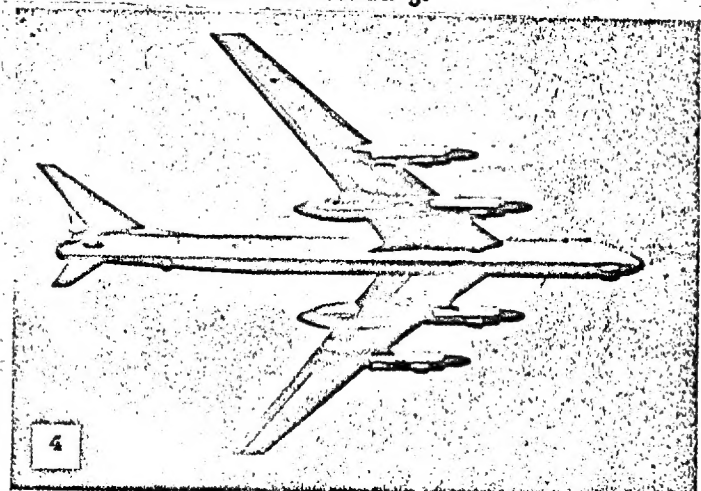
*B-47 bomber.*

**STRATEGIC DETERRENT**—A new generation of bombers, compact nuclear weapons and refueling techniques in the early 1950's gave the U.S. the capability of striking the Soviet heartland.



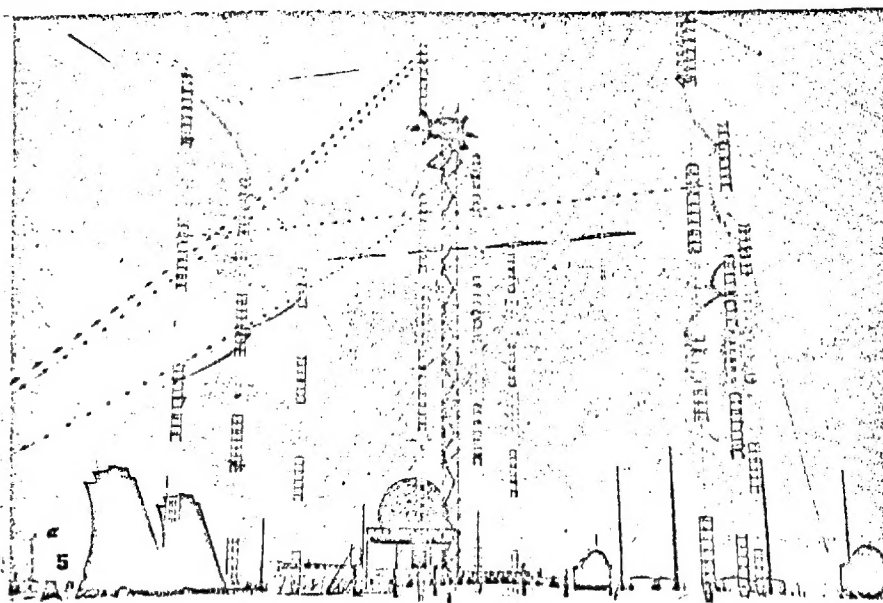
*Soviet atomic test (1962).*

**GOING UP**—By 1949, Russia had an atomic bomb. By 1953, both sides had the hydrogen bomb. The arms race was escalating.



*Soviet Tu-20 (Bear) bomber.*

**DELIVERY SYSTEM**—The Russians relied heavily on antiaircraft missiles and guns for defense, but they also built a fleet of medium- and long-range bombers.



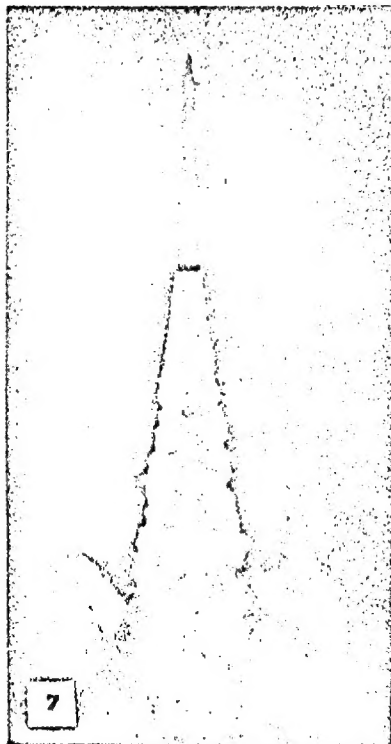
DEW Line radar station in the Arctic.

**DEFENSE SYSTEM**—Through the 1950's there was much talk about "the missile gap," but the immediate danger was still the manned bomber. The U.S. built an elaborate radar warning network, but it was destined soon to become obsolete.



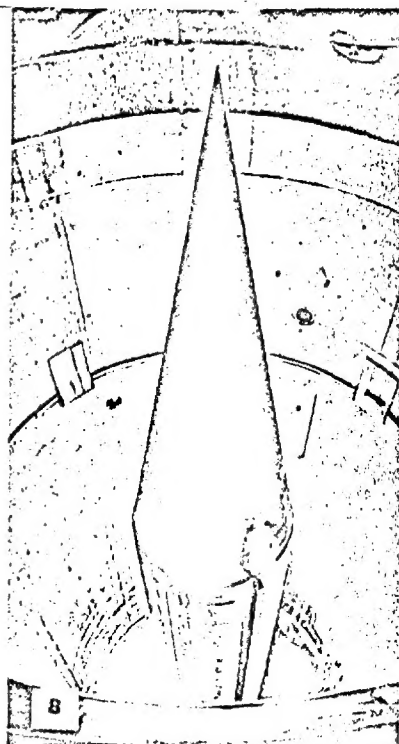
Guided missile catches target plane.

**INTERCEPTOR**—Technology was moving apace. Not only were there short-range guided missiles, but liquid-fueled ICBM's by the end of the '50's.



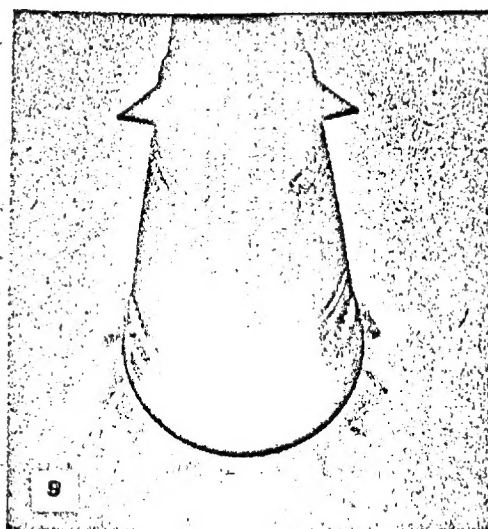
Minuteman missile is launched.

**INVULNERABLE?**—The solid-fuel missile, ready for instant firing, brought a new element into the race in the '60's.



Soviet missile in silo.

**RIPOSTE**—Russia countered with its own offensive missiles in "hard"—attack-proofed—emplacements.



Experimental ABM (Sprint) blasts off.

**NEXT STEP?**—Now Russia has an antiballistic missile (ABM) defensive system. Should the U.S. reply—despite the cost—by going ahead with its own ABM, now at development level?